

A
LETTER

To the Honourable

Sir Robert Howard :

Together with some

Animadversions

Upon a BOOK Entituled,

Christianity not Mysterious.

By EDMUND ELYS, some-
time Fellow of *Baliol* College in
OXFORD.

Τὸ Ἀληθὲς ἐν Βεβλῇ κεῖται.

L O N D O N :

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To the Honourable

Sir Robert Howard.

SIR,

I Challenge the Performance of your Promise, "That you will not take it ill, if
 "any Man shall offer Reasons unclogg'd
 "with Passion against any thing you have
 "writ; and that if you cannot clearly answer
 "them you will submit, and acknowledge
 "your Error. Amongst some Papers entitled, *Polemica Christiana*, publish'd before I
 saw the Book entitled, *A Twofold Vindication*, &c. there are some Reflections on your
History of Religion, which, if I had known to
 have been yours, perhaps I might not have
 us'd some of the *Expressions* which you will
 find in those Reflections: But whatever they
 are, GOD is my Witness, no *Inordinate Passion*, but a *Fervent Love* of the Truth, you
 oppose, prompted me to those Conceptions,
 which I design'd to declare by them. That
 prodigious *Huff* of your Friend shall not dis-
 courage

courage me from publishing some more of my Animadversions upon your Book.

“ The History of Religion is a Test upon
 “ all its Readers : No Man can declare his
 “ Dislike of that Book, but at the same time
 “ he proclaims that he esteems the Substance
 “ of Religion to consist in that, which is least
 “ to be understood, that he is all for Disci-
 “ pline. GOD knows I am not for any other
Discipline but what may conduce to the Glo-
 ry of GOD, and the Good of Men. Yet I
 must declare to all the World that I dislike
 your Book : In which, p. 43. I find these
 Words : “ I wish that among the most Re-
 “ *formed* Christians these Methods of Priest-
 “ craft were not so much, and violently pur-
 “ sued ; the Impositions to believe and pro-
 “ fess unnecessary, and even extravagant
 “ things, where neither Reason will justify it,
 “ nor does Religion require it. Here you
 come out of your *Hole*, and plainly enough
 acknowledge that you charge *the Church of En-
 gland with PRIESTCRAFT*, as well as *the
 Church of Rome*. Does not Religion require
 that the *Profession* of believing that JESUS
 CHRIST, the *Saviour of the World*, is the
 true and eternal GOD, should be the *princi-
 pal Term of Christian Communion* ? If you shall
 be pleas'd to let us know what you mean by
unnecessary, and even extravagant things, I
 trust in GOD I shall be able to give you an
 Answer. I have formerly animadverted on
 these Words, p. 63. “ A Man must be his
 “ own Expositor, Minister, Bishop, and
 “ Council

“Council. I shall now give you some of my Thoughts upon the Words following, “for these will not *bear* his Punishment, he must *bear* it himself.

Ans. Therefore a Man ought not to be his own Expofitor, Minister, Bishop, and Council, because if he be fo, he shall bear the Punishment of *Disobedience* to them, whom our blessed LORD, by his *Apostle*, commands him to obey, *Heb. 13. 17. Obey them that have the Rule over you, and submit your selves, for they watch for your Souls, as they that must give Account.* “Those Powers and Authorities, say you, given to others, was the Cause of making and multiplying Creeds, and Rules of Faith, which ever were modell’d according to the present Interests and Animofities of prevailing Parties. Here you revile *all Councils*, and consequently cut off your self from the Body of the *visible Church of CHRIST*. ’Tis evident that he cannot be a true Member of the Church of *England* that contemns the *four first general Councils*, or any one of them. To say that the *Creeds*, or *Forms of sound Words*, which were made by the Councils of *NICE* and *CONSTANTINOPLE* (the two other Councils, *viz. Eph. and Chalcedon*. made none) were not Modelled according to Godliness (κατ’ Εὐσέλειαν) but according to the present Interests and Animofities of prevailing Parties, is, I think, the greatest Slander, that any Gentleman professing himself to be a Member of the Church of *England* was ever guilty of,

however provok'd by any *Interest* or *Animosi-*
ty. I pray GOD to give you true Repen-
 tance. P. 96. "'Tis not reasonable, say you,
 "to believe that GOD who knows our Infir-
 "mities, will punish *Error*; which is no Sin,
 "because it comes not from the Will and In-
 "tention: One Man may be weaker than an-
 "other, and *both* may mistake more or less,
 "according to the difference of their Capaci-
 "ties; but neither of them is thereby guilty,
 "because the Mistakes and Opinions proceed
 "from their Innocence, which is to say their
 "Weakness and Ignorance. This Conceit of
 yours is grossly *erroneous*, that *Error* comes not
 from the *Will*. I grant that *Nescience*, or the
not knowing of any thing, which comes not
 from the *Will* is no Sin: But I assert that all
Error comes from the *Will*, being a *false* or
irregular Judgment, an *Assent* to that which is
false, or a *Dissent* from that which is true. 'Tis
 not only possible, but our absolute Duty to
 SUSPEND our *Judgment*, where we have
 no Evidence of the Truth or Falsehood of
 any *Proposition*. 'Tis wisely observ'd by the
Stoicks, that "'tis agreeable to Nature, that
 "is, to right Reason, that we should suspend
 "our Judgment concerning any thing, of
 "which we have no Evidence. *Epict. lib. 3. cap. 3.*
 Πίσυκε πάσα ψυχὴ τὸ ἀληθὲς ἐπινεύειν, πρὸς τὸ ψεῦδος
 ἀνένειν, πρὸς τὸ ἀδύνατον ἐπέχειν. "Every (rational)
 "Soul acting according to her Nature assents
 "to that which is true, dissents from that
 "which is false, suspends her Judgment in
 "Matters of which she has no Evidence or
 "Certainty

Arrian

" Certainty. All false Judgments are *self-
 Conceits*, which always proceed from *self-
 will*, which is the *Head Spring* or *Fountain* of
 all Iniquity. " I did not think to have taken
 " the Libeller to task, says your Friend, for
 " any other of his wild Talk about Mystery,
 " because all the common Mistakes on that
 " Topick are so manifestly discover'd by a ve-
 " ry great Master, that I do not expect a
 " Man of Reputation will in hast venture a
 " Defence against him. I do not pretend
 much to *Reputation*: I am willing to be *made
 as the Filth of the World, and the Off-scouring of
 all things*. But I solemnly profess, by the
 Grace of GOD, to *hold the MYSTERY of
 the Faith in a pure Conscience*: And I should
 defile my Conscience with a very foul *Sin of
 Omission*, if I should not publish my *Animad-
 versions* upon that very wicked Book entitled
Christianity not mysterious. I Beseech the only
 wise GOD to convince you of all your *Er-
 rors*, and to lead you by his holy Spirit into
 all *Truth*, and to give you all things which he
 knows to be best for you,

Your Servant

E. E.

Animadversions

Upon a BOOK Entituled,
 Christianity not Mysterious.

R Eason, says this Author, may be de-
 "fin'd, that Faculty of the Soul,
 "which discovers the Certainty of any thing
 "dubious or obscure, by comparing it with
 "something evidently known.

Ans. This is no Definition of *Reason*, but
 an inadequate Description of the *Humane Intel-
 lect or Understanding*. **ESSENTIAL
 REASON IS INFINITE WISDOM or
 KNOWLEDGE** absolutely perfect of Be-
 ing absolutely infinite. Being absolutely IN-
 FINITE communicating it self to the *Hu-
 man Understanding*, produces that *Conception*
 which we call the **IDEA OF GOD**. This
 is **REASON PARTICIPATED** by all *Ra-
 tional Creatures*. The *Humane Intellect or
 Understanding* is that Power or Faculty of
 the Soul of Man, by which he is capable of
 apprehending or perceiving that there is a
 Being

Being absolutely infinite, that is, GOD; and that all Finite Beings, Natures, or Essences, and all natural Motions or Operations are deriv'd from him. The Intellect is commonly call'd Reason. The Ground of which Appellation is this, that every Act of the Intellect or Understanding, so far as it is not deprav'd or perverted by the Will, is nothing else but the Perception of ESSENTIAL REASON in it self, or in its Effects.

P. 23, 24. " No *Christian* I know of now
 " expressly says *Reason* and the *Gospel* are con-
 " trary to one another : But, which returns
 " to the same, very many affirm, that tho
 " the *Doctrines* of the latter cannot in them-
 " selves be contradictory to the Principles of
 " the former, as proceeding both from *GOD*,
 " yet that according to our Conceptions of
 " them, they may seem directly to clash :
 " And that tho we cannot reconcile them by
 " reason of our corrupt and limited Under-
 " standings ; yet that from the Authority of
 " *Divine Revelation*, we are bound to believe
 " and acquiesce in them ; or, as the Fathers
 " taught 'em to speak, to *adore what we can-*
 " *not comprehend.*

Answ. We do not say that *Reason* and the
Gospel do ever seem to clash, or to contradict
 one another, but only to those Men, who by
 the Perverseness of their *Will*, averting it
 self from the *Divine Goodness*, avert their
Understanding from the *Truth* of that Do-
 ctine which is destructive to all their *Lusts*
 or Inclinations arising from the false Appearance
 of

of Good. We say indeed that the *Fathers* have taught us, according to the *Holy Scriptures*, that we must *adore* what we cannot *comprehend*. He that performs any true and acceptable Worship to Almighty GOD, does most humbly and heartily acknowledge that the Object of his Worship has all the Excellency and Perfection that he can apprehend or conceive, as signified by these Words, *Power, Wisdom, Goodness, &c.* And that it is infinitely more excellent and glorious than can ever be any way apprehended or conceived by *Men* or *Angels*. 'Tis evident that though we know GOD in some measure, he infinitely transcends the Comprehension of our *Reason* or *Understanding*. But says our Adversary, p. 78. "to comprehend in all" correct Authors, is nothing else but to know.

Ans. Comprehension is Knowledge, but all Knowledge is not Comprehension: Comprehension is that Knowledge which extends to all that can be known of the *Object*.

P: 88. "As for GOD, we Comprehend" nothing better than his Attributes. We "know not, tis true the Nature of that eternal *Subject*, or *Essence* wherein Infinite " Goodness, Love, Knowledge, Power and " Wisdom coexist; but we are not better acquainted with the *real Essence* of any of his " Creatures.

Here'tis manifest that this Man's most prodigious *Self-conceit* and Affectation of SINGULARITY averts his *Understanding* from a
due

due Reflexion upon the true IDEA OF GOD in his own Soul, and in the Souls of all Men, in the Contemplation whereof we may easily discern this Truth, that the several divine Attributes are several Significations or Manifestations of the one Being absolutely Infinite and incomprehensible. They are not in GOD, or the *Divine Essence*, as *Accidents* in a *Subject*. To talk of the *Nature of an Essence* is an Absurdity, which, I think, no *Scholar* was ever guilty of, but the Author of this most impious *Libel* against the *Holy Catholick Church*. There cannot be a more Notorious Contradiction than to say we COMPREHEND INFINITE Goodness, Love, &c. We grant that every Pious Man is better acquainted with the *Divine Attributes* than with the Properties of any Creature: But we know 'tis absolutely impossible for any Man or Angel to *Comprehend* the Divine Essence; and we know 'tis not so impossible to comprehend the Nature or Essence of any Creature: Therefore I think it my Duty to proclaim to all the World my just Abhorrence and Detestation of the blind Boldness of this *insolent* Writer. "I think, " says he, I may now warrantably conclude "that nothing is a Mystery because we know "not its Essence, since it appears that it is "neither knowable in it self, nor ever "thought of by us: So that the divine Being "himself cannot, with more Reason, be accounted *mysterious* in this respect than the "most contemptible of his Creatures.

Answ.

Answ. If the *divine Being* be truly and really INFINITE, then there is infinite more Reason that this *Being* should be accounted *mysterious* in this respect, that it *passeth Knowledge*, or the utmost Capacity of our intellectual Faculty, than the most glorious of his Creatures.

P. 91. "Such Revelations of God in the "New Testament are call'd Mysteries not "from any present Inconceivableness or Obscurity, but with respect to what they were "before this Revelation, as that is called our "Task, which we long since perform'd.

I shall here entreat the pious and learned Reader to employ his Thoughts in the deepest Search after the true and genuine Sense of these sacred Words, 1 *Tim.* 3. 9. "Holding "the MYSTERY of the Faith in a pure Conscience. Ἐχούτας τὸ ΜΥΣΤΗΡΙΟΝ τῆς ΠΙΣΤΕΩΣ ὡς καθαρὰ συνειδήσει. The principal Object of *Christian Faith* is the Person of JESUS CHRIST; so that no Man can ever know any thing contain'd in the *Holy Scriptures* (Καθὼς δεῖ Γινῶναι, 1 *Cor.* 8. 2.) As he ought to know, but when his Apprehensions of it have Reference to the Love of CHRIST, which (though it be known in some measure) PASSETH KNOWLEDGE, that is to say, is *incomprehensible*, having no other Foundation than the INFINITY of the *divine Goodness*. Γινῶναι τοῦ τοῦ ὑπερβάλλουσιν ἢ γινώσκουσιν Ἀγάπην τῷ Χριστῷ, *Eph.* 3. 19. To have a due Reference to CHRIST in our Apprehensions of any Doctrine contain'd in the *Holy*

Holy Scriptures is to give a firm and immovable Assent to it, *Καθὼς ἔστιν Ἀλήθεια ἐν τοῖς* *ΙΗΣΟΥ*, *As the Truth is in JESUS*, who being GOD from everlasting did in time, take on him the Nature of Man to *save us from our Sins*. To be sav'd from all known Sin, so that we would rather lay down our Lives than *hold the Truth in Unrighteousness*, or knowingly and wilfully transgress the Law of our *Maker, Redeemer and Sanctifier*, is to *keep a pure Conscience*. And he that keeps a pure Conscience through CHRIST enabling him will easily conceive that this Expression of St. Paul, *ἔχον τὸ μυστήριον τῆς πίστεως ἐν καρδίᾳ συνειδήσει* is of the same Signification with those Words of St. John, 1 Epist. 5. 12, *ἔχον τὸν υἱόν*. "He that hath (or holdeth) "the SON, hath Life: And he that hath not "the SON of God hath not Life. If *Jesus Christ, the everlasting Son of the Father*, were not *Reveal'd*, he could not be the Object of *Our Faith*: But the clearest Revelation we have of him does not make him cease to be a MYSTERY. Great is the MYSTERY of Godliness. GOD was manifest in the Flesh, &c. The SON OF GOD is reveal'd, not only as the Object of our *Knowledge*, but also of our everlasting *Admiration*. His Name shall be called WONDERFUL, *Isaiah 9. 6*. I shall endeavour to give the candid Reader a further Illustration of this most important Truth, by making some Reflections upon some other Expressions of the blessed *Apostle, Rom. 16, 25, 26, 27*. "Now to him that is of Pow-
"er

“er to establish you according to my Gospel,
 “and the preaching of Jesus Christ (accor-
 “ding to the Revelation of the MYSTERY,
 “which was kept secret since the World be-
 “gan, but now is made manifest, and by the
 “Scriptures of the Prophets according to the
 “Commandment of the everlasting God
 “made known to all Nations for the Obedi-
 “ence of Faith) to God only Wise be Glory
 “through Jesus Christ, for ever, *Amen.*

The holy Apostle calls the *principal Subject* of all his preaching (*viz.*) that JESUS CHRIST is the *Propitiation for the Sins of the whole World*) a MYSTERY both with respect to its having been *kept secret*, and with respect to its present *Manifestation*. If the Word *Mystery* signified nothing else, but a Matter *kept secret*, *viz.* wholly secret or undiscover'd, then indeed the Matter being *Reveal'd*, there would be no *Mystery*. But certainly if the word had no other Significati- on, but of a Matter *kept secret*, the Apostle would never have us'd this *Expression*, the *Revelation of the Mystery that was kept secret*. But says our Adversary, Yes : Even “ *As that may be call'd our Task which we have long since perform'd.*

Answ. A *Task* being a Work which we are enjoyn'd to perform, we may properly say, it *was* our *Task*, but 'twould be absurd to say that any Work is our *Task*, *which we have long since perform'd*. 'Tis evident therefore, that the blessed Apostle, by the word *Mystery*, wou'd have us to understand that the *principal Sub-
ject*

ſect of all his preaching, viz. that JESUS CHRIST is the Propitiation for the Sins of the whole World, though now it be made known or declar'd to all Nations, ſtill remains a *Mystery*, being ſuch a wonderful Contrivance and Effect of infinite Wiſdom and Power to reconcile infinite *vindictive Juſtice* or *Hatred* of SIN, to infinite *Goodneſs* and *Mercy* in bringing SINNERS to true Repentance and eternal Life, that it *paſſeth Knowledge*, i. e. that it infinitely transcends the utmoſt Capacity of any finite Underſtanding, ſo that a pious Soul in the Contemplation thereof finds Matter of perpetual ADMIRATION, Eph. 3. 8, 9. "Unto me who am leſs than
 "the leaſt of all Saints, is this Grace given,
 "that I ſhould preach among the Gentiles
 "the UNSEARCHABLE RICHES of
 "Chriſt; and to make all Men ſee what is
 "the Fellowship of the MYSTERY, which
 "from the Beginning of the World hath been
 "hid in God, who created all things by Je-
 "ſus Chriſt. By the *Riches of Chriſt* we are
 to underſtand the *Abundance* of his Excellen-
 cies and Perfections communicable to thoſe
 that OBEY him by *Virtue* of his being the
Propitiation for the Sins of the whole World.
 The bleſſed Apoſtle plainly ſhews that the
 Subject of his preaching is a MYSTERY in
 that he calls it the *unſearchable Riches of Chriſt*
 (Τὸν Ἀνεξίχνιασόν Πλάτον τῶ Χειρῶ,) In the
 following Verſe he expreſſly calls it a *Mystery*.

The LORD grant that by the Illumi-
 nation of his *holy Spirit* we may ſo clearly
 under-

(16)

understand that **CHRISTIANITY** is **MYSTERIOUS**, *i. e.* that the **RICHES OF CHRIST** are **UNSEARCHABLE**, that all our natural Desires of Knowledge may be so *sanctified*, as to be resolv'd into this one Desire, that we may *know the Love of Christ, which passeth Knowledge, that we may be fill'd with all the Fullness of GOD.*

ΕΡΧΟΤ ΚΤΠΙΕ ΙΗΣΟΥ.

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